Outbreak of Plague in H.P. and Haryana

*306. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a team of experts has been deputed by his Ministry to investigate the outbreak of plague in Himachal Pradesh and Haryana;

(b) if so, whether the team has submitted its Report;

(c) if so, the findings of the Report; and

(d) the efforts made by his Ministry to check the spread of plague in these States and to other parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) to (d) After receiving information from Health Secretary, Government of Himachal Pradesh regarding admission of a few cases presenting with fever and haemoptysis (blood in sputum) in two hospitals of Shimla district and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, a team of experts from National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), Delhi, consisting of an Epidemiologist, a Microbiologist and an Entomologist was deputed immediately to visit the affected areas of Shimla district from 14th to 17th February, 2002, for investigating the outbreak and to provide technical guidance to the State Government for containing the outbreak. Another team consisting of six public health experts was sent to Chandigarh on 22.2.2002. These teams visited the affected areas and examined the patients in the hospitals.

After the visit, the teams submitted their report, which confirmed the outbreak of febrile illness with haemoptysis (blood in sputum) reported in Hatkoti Village of Jubbal-Kotkhai Block, Shimla District, as pneumonic plague. Out of the sixteen cases of plague detected in Himachal Pradesh and the four suspected cases with plague like symptoms from

Chandigarh and its adjoining areas, 5 have died and 15 have been discharged after recovery.

The following steps were taken to contain the outbreak in coordination with the State Government:

1. The emergency medical requirements of the Government of Himachal Pradesh were promptly met with.
2. Guidelines were issued to Health Authorities of Government of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Haryana and UT of Chandigarh on the following issues:
   - Strengthening of surveillance
   - Chemoprophylaxis to contacts
   - Quarantine of close contacts restriction of movement of persons in affected areas
   - Standard work precautions
   - Safe disposal of bodies of persons dying due to plague
3. Door to door interaction with the population in the affected and adjoining village for dispensing antibiotics, obtaining information about the new cases and educating the people was conducted.
4. Fumigation of the patients' houses as well as the transport vehicles was carried out using Formalin (10%).
5. About 28,000 to 30,000 people, including doctors, para-medical personnel and health workers were provided with chemoprophylaxis.
6. Proper treatment of patients and isolation of cases in the hospitals.
7. Quarantine of close contacts.
8. EEC campaign focusing on restriction of mobility, immediate reporting to health facility in case of fever etc. and reassuring the public not to panic.